



File Code: 1010
Route To:

Date: October 29, 2020

Subject: Regional Order No. 20-24

To: File

I have decided to issue Regional Order No. 20-24, which prohibits building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, or stove fire, and smoking on National Forest System lands under my jurisdiction. This Order contains an exemption for portable lanterns or stoves using gas, jellied petroleum, or pressurized liquid fuel within a Developed Recreation Site. This Order will protect natural resources and provide for the safety of forest visitors by mitigating wildfire ignition potential during these extreme fire conditions. It will be in effect from October 31, 2020, through November 6, 2020.

To date in 2020, 1,240 wildfires have burned approximately 1.7 million acres of National Forest System lands in California; 9,228 wildfires have burned approximately 3.1 million acres across all jurisdictions in the state. The Northern and Southern California Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs) are now both at PL3 (the Northern California GAAC moved to PL3 on October 27).

Weather conditions throughout the state will continue to be conducive to fire ignition and spread with unseasonably hot and dry conditions. Wind events in both northern and southern California have recently fueled existing fires and spread vegetation litter and debris across fire scars, adding to the threat.

Nationally, and within California, firefighting resources are still operating at maximum capacity and there are significant shortages of resources. Being late in the fire season, many firefighting resources have timed out of their duty assignments. Nationally, there are very few Incident Management Teams available to respond to large-scale blazes. Fire engines and major firefighting equipment are already assigned to existing fires or positioned to prevent new fire starts from escaping initial attack. This situation, along with the increase in large fire activity in other states such as Colorado and Arizona, have created a resource shortage for fighting fires in California. Just this week, for example, a crew was ordered for firefighting on the Los Padres National Forest and no resources were available. This situation means that should additional fires break, the agency may not be able to respond in a timely manner, further risking life and property.

This scarcity of resources has caused the Forest Service to seek assistance from the U.S. Marine Corps as well as other countries, including Canada and Mexico. Two hundred thirty-four Marines from the 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group and one Marine Expeditionary Force based out of Camp Pendleton are deployed in support of the August



Complex. Sixteen fire suppression crews, fifteen fire engines and sixteen overhead personnel from Canada are supporting fire suppression efforts in northern California. Five fire suppression crews and four overhead personnel from Mexico are supporting fire suppression efforts in Southern California. One National Incident Management Organization has been assigned to assist with fire suppression in California.

To further add to the complexity of this fire season, National Forests in California have seen record numbers of visitors this summer. Reports indicate that use levels normally associated with peak holidays such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day are being seen every day throughout the summer and into the fall. Campgrounds and dispersed use areas are reportedly full to capacity and overflowing. Overflow parking from parking areas have spilled into roadways. Conflicts between use groups have increased, as has criminal activity. And trash and human waste are collecting faster than staffs are able to clear and clean facilities. These visitor use levels heighten the possibility of human-caused fires and generally require increased management attention. As a result, our already over-extended personnel are stretched even further and cannot ensure that fire starts are promptly discovered, reported and extinguished.

The potential for new fires to start and burn uncontrollably continues to be extremely high. The combination of extreme fire conditions and weather, along with significant shortages in firefighting resources, poses a substantial threat to communities and the visiting public. As 95% of all wildfires are human-caused, it is prudent to take every precaution to prevent additional fire starts during this unprecedented fire season.

This Regional Order includes an exemption for persons holding a Forest Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order (Form FS-7700-48). Authorization under this exemption will only be provided if I or my delegate determine that the risk to personal health and safety is reasonable considering the circumstances of the request. We may also require appropriate personal protective equipment and other necessary safety measures. I hereby delegate the authority to sign Form FS-7700-48 granting an exemption to this Regional Order to all Forest Supervisors in the Pacific Southwest Region.

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act. This action falls within the category identified in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(1) – prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety – and does not require documentation in a decision memo, decision notice, or record of decision. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this temporary closure.

X 

Signed by: RANDY MOORE

RANDY MOORE

Regional Forester Pacific Southwest Region

Enclosure – Regional Order No. 20-24